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SUBJECT: BAHRAIN HUMAN RIGHTS EVALUATION PLAN

1. FOLLOWING IS DRAFT HUMAN RIGHTS EVALUATION PLAN FOR
BAHRAIN. WOULD APPRECIATE EMBASSY COMMENTS, PARTICULARLY
ON IDENTIFICATION OF OBJECTIVES BY JUNE 27.

2. BEGIN TEXT:

A. CONDITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN BAHRAIN

SECTION 1 - RESPECT FOR THE INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON.

BAHRAIN, A BRITISH PROTECTORATE UNTIL FULL INDEPENDENCE IN
1971, IS RULED BY AN HEREDITARY AMIR WHO APPOINTS CABINET
MINISTERS. THE 1973 CONSTITUTION, WHICH CAREFULLY DE-
LINEATES THE POWER OF AMIR AND CABINET, PROVIDED FOR AN
ELECTED NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. IN 1975, HOWEVER, THE AMIR AND
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 147937

GOVERNMENT, FACED WITH STIFF OPPOSITION IN THE ASSEMBLY,
SUSPENDED THOSE PROVISIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION DEALING
WITH THE ELECTIVE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH, DISSOLVED THE
ASSEMBLY AND RETURNED TO RULE BY AMIRI DECREE ON THE ADVICE
OF THE CABINET.

THE BAHRAINI CONSTITUTION DEVOTES 28 ARTICLES TO DEFINING

AND PROTECTING HUMAN, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS. IT EMPHASIZES EQUALITY, HUMAN DIGNITY, DUE PROCESS, FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE AND ASSEMBLY. IT PROHIBITS DISCRIMINATION AND THE USE OF TORTURE.

IN LIGHT OF ITS HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT, BAHRAIN SEEMS TO HAVE EXHIBITED REMARKABLE CONCERN FOR HUMAN POLITICAL AND SOCIAL RIGHTS IN THE CONTEXT OF ISLAMIC TRADITIONS. AFTER CENTURIES OF UNREST AND DOMINATION BY VARIOUS REGIONAL AND WORLD POWERS, THE SUNNI ARAB AL-KHALIFA FAMILY OCCUPIED BAHRAIN AND ESTABLISHED DOMINANCE OVER PRE-DOMINATELY SHIA POPULATION IN LATE 18TH CENTURY. SINCE THEN DESPITE DIMINISHING, BUT ONCE SIGNIFICANT, COMMUNAL TENSIONS, A CENTURY AND A HALF OF BRITISH PROTECTORATE RELATIONSHIP AND 20TH CENTURY GROWING PAINS INCLUDING INTERMITTENT POLITICAL AND LABOR UNREST, BAHRAIN SEEMS TO HAVE ESTABLISHED A TRADITION OF SOCIAL AMITY WITH PARTICULAR AVERSION TO VIOLENT OR CRUEL IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICE POWER.

THE GOVERNMENT FACES A SMALL, BUT WELL ORGANIZED RADICAL OPPOSITION WHICH ADVOCATES ITS VIOLENT OVERTHROW. THIS GROUP RECENTLY CARRIED OUT A POLITICAL ASSASSINATION. IN DEALING WITH THIS GROUP THE AUTHORITIES HAVE, ON OCCASION, VIOLATED THE HUMAN RIGHTS SAFEGUARDS OF THE CONSTITUTION. SUCH CASES HAVE BEEN LIMITED IN NUMBER AND WOULD NOT

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 STATE 147937

APPEAR TO CONSTITUTE A SYSTEMATIC PATTERN OF GROSS VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

SECTION 2 - RESPECT FOR CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES

RELIGIOUS, ETHNIC AND RACIAL TOLERANCE HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN A STRIKING CHARACTERISTIC OF BAHRAIN. THE EASY ACCEPTANCE OF BAHRAINI JEWS IN IMPORTANT ROLES IN THIS ARAB/ISLAMIC COMMUNITY IS BUT ONE EXAMPLE OF THIS ENLIGHTENED ATTITUDE. THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN IS PROCEEDING APACE; LONG ESTABLISHED IN EDUCATION, IT IS NOW MOVING TOWARD THE GOAL OF JOB EQUALITY. IN GENERAL, TRAVEL AND EMIGRATION POLICIES IN BAHRAIN ARE LIBERAL; MOVEMENT WITHIN BAHRAIN IS FREE.

WHILE REGARD FOR SANCTITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND RULE OF LAW REMAINS RELATIVELY HIGH, GIVEN REGIONAL HISTORY AND TRADITIONS, THE MOMENTUM TOWARD REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY SUFFERED A SERIOUS SETBACK WITH THE DISSOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN 1975. THE GOVERNMENT OF BAHRAIN ARGUED THAT BAHRAIN'S YEAR AND A HALF EXPERIMENT WITH

PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT FAILED BECAUSE THE ASSEMBLY HAD BEEN A DIVISIVE INFLUENCE AND HAD OBSTRUCTED THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO GET ON WITH URGENTLY NEEDED ADMINISTRATIVE AND ECONOMIC/SOCIAL REFORMS. THE GOVERNMENT INSISTS PUBLICLY THAT THE CONSTITUTION REMAINS IN EFFECT AND THAT DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT WILL BE REINSTITUTED IN SOME AS YET UNDEFINED FORM IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THE ABSENCE OF WESTERN REPRESENTATIVE INSTITUTIONS IS IN PART COUNTERBALANCED BY THE GENERALLY BENEVOLENT CHARACTER OF THE PRESENT BAHRAINI GOVERNMENT. TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS SUCH AS THE RULER'S MAJLIS, OR OPEN PUBLIC AUDIENCE, CONTINUE TO PROVIDE THE PEOPLE WITH A MECHANISM TO COMMUNICATE THEIR VIEWS TO THE AUTHORITIES.

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PAGE 04 STATE 147937

DURING PERIODS OF HEIGHTENED SECURITY CONCERNS, THE GOVERNMENT HAS BRIEFLY SUSPENDED PUBLICATION OF BAHRAINI NEWSPAPERS. EDITORIAL POLITICAL CRITICISM IN THE LOCAL PRESS IS GENERALLY BLAND. THESE FACTORS SUGGEST THAT UNDER GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE, THE BAHRAINI PRESS IS EXPECTED TO ENGAGE IN FAIRLY CAREFUL "SELF-CENSORSHIP."

SECTION 3 - RECENT TRENDS IN GOB POLICIES

SINCE OIL INCOME BEGAN 40 YEARS AGO, THE BAHRAINI REGIME SET AN EXAMPLE IN THE REGION BY LIBERAL POLICIES IN PUBLIC HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION. MORE RECENTLY, THE GOVERNMENT HAS EMBARKED ON COSTLY ANTI-INFLATION SUBSIDIES AND PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAMS.

COMMERCIAL AND REAL ESTATE BOOMS ARE INTENSIFYING THE INEQUALITY OF WEALTH IN THIS ESSENTIALLY FREE ENTERPRISE COMMUNITY, AND THE PROMINENT ROLE OF THE LARGE RULING FAMILY AS LANDLORDS IS NOT LOST ON THE WAGE-EARNING CITIZEN. NEVERTHELESS, THE GOVERNMENT IS DEVOTING THE BULK OF ITS LIMITED PUBLIC RESOURCES TO ACHIEVE THE SOCIAL WELFARE PRIVILEGES GRANTED THE CITIZEN IN THE CONSTITUTION. THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE OF CORRUPTION IN BAHRAIN.

SECTION 4 - GOVERNMENT OF BAHRAIN'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR ITS HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD

DESPITE ITS FAILED EXPERIMENT IN REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY, THE GOVERNMENT OF BAHRAIN MEETS A DECENT WORLD STANDARD IN ITS ADHERENCE TO HUMAN RIGHTS. AT PRESENT, THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION SEEMS TO ACCEPT THE REGIME'S EMPHASIS ON LAW AND ORDER AND ECONOMIC PROGRESS

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 05 STATE 147937

AT THE EXPENSE OF INSTITUTIONALIZED POPULAR POLITICAL EXPRESSION. GIVEN THE RELATIVE SOPHISTICATION OF THE BAHRAINI SOCIETY AND ITS POLITICAL AWARENESS, THIS BALANCE OF COMPLACENCY COULD EASILY SHIFT.

SECTION 5 - INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL HAS FOLLOWED THE CASES OF MORE THAN 30 PEOPLE IMPRISONED FOR ALLEGED POLITICAL REASONS IN BAHRAIN. IN SEPTEMBER OF 1975, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WROTE TO THE RULER ADVOCATING RELEASE OF THESE INDIVIDUALS. MOST HAVE SINCE BEEN RELEASED BY COURT PROCEDURE.

NO RECOGNIZED INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC OR PRIVATE ORGANIZATION HAS EVER, TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, CALLED FOR INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN BAHRAIN, SO WE HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING HOW THE GOVERNMENT OF BAHRAIN WOULD REACT TO SUCH A SUGGESTION.

B. ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

THERE IS NO CONSISTENT PATTERN OF GROSS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN BAHRAIN. THE LIMITED INSTANCES OF RECENT VIOLATIONS HAVE BEEN IN REACTION TO THE GOVERNMENT'S CONCERN TO PRESERVE A DELICATE SECURITY BALANCE. INFORMALLY WE HAVE PRESSED THE RULERS OF BAHRAIN RATHER HARD ON THE ISSUE OF A RETURN TO REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT. WE SHOULD CONTINUE THIS QUIET DIPLOMATIC PRESSURE, AND IN ADDITION WE SHOULD:

(1) CONTINUE TO USE OUR INFORMATION PROGRAMS TO EMPHASIZE TO BAHRAINI LEADERS THE BENEFITS WE PERCEIVE IN REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT.

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PAGE 06 STATE 147937

(2) CONTINUE TO USE OUR CU PROGRAM TO BRING BAHRAINI LEADERS INTO CONTACT WITH OUR DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS DURING THEIR VISITS TO THE UNITED STATES.

(3) BEGIN A DIALOGUE WITH BAHRAINI OFFICIALS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE BAHRAINI LEGAL SYSTEM.

(4) CONTINUE TO BROADEN OUR RELATIONS TO EXERT BY
EXAMPLE ADDITIONAL MOMENTUM TOWARD A LIBERAL SOCIETY.

SINCE BAHRAIN'S REACTION TO U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY HAS
BEEN GENERALLY POSITIVE, A BALANCED, LOW KEY EFFORT TO

INFLUENCE BAHRAINI POLICY IN THE AREA OF HUMAN RIGHTS
WOULD LIKELY BE WELL RECEIVED. THERE WOULD BE LITTLE
RISK IN SUCH A POLICY TO OUR OVERALL INTERESTS IN
BAHRAIN AND THE GULF REGION. CHRISTOPHER

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